

Mentor program may meet future technology needs

by Francis I. Crumb, Information directorate

ROME, N.Y. — It was 1974. The personal computer was still a vision. VCRs and microwaves had not become standard home fixtures. The next millennium was little more than science fiction.

The same year, with an eye toward meeting the manpower requirements of an anticipated explosion in technology, the Mohawk Valley Engineers Executive Council or MVEEC, held its first Student Introduction to Engineering and Science. The goal of the program was to acquaint high school students with engineering, science and technology by introducing them to the varied and rewarding careers in these fields.

Nearly 3,000 students from more than 40 schools in six Central New York counties have participated in the half-day on-site mentoring programs during the past quarter century. More than 70 area companies and organizations, including Air Force researchers at the former Griffiss Air Force Base, N.Y., have participated.

On March 25, 150 students attended a luncheon and then joined mentors at workplaces across the region as the council celebrated the 25th anniversary of its annual project.

Chester J. Maciag, an electronics engineer at the Air Force Research Laboratory Information directorate, is the current council chairman and has a first-hand appreciation for the program.

As a junior at local Waterville Central School, Maciag was a student participant in March 1986 and was hosted at what was then Rome Air Development Center. He pursued his interest in electrical engineering by earning a bachelor's degree from Rochester Institute of Technology and returned as a full-time member of the Rome laboratory staff in 1991.

"Today's students represent the exciting future of 21st-century technology," Maciag said. "More than a million new engineers, researchers and technicians are expected to be needed in the U.S. by 2005."



CARRYING ON TRADITION — Chester J. Maciag, an electronics engineer at the Air Force Research Laboratory Information directorate, briefs a group of Central New York high school students on technology programs at Rome, N.Y. Maciag was a student participant in the SITES program in 1986. (Air Force Photo by Albert Santacrose)

This year's event provided some of those aspiring minds with the first-hand opportunity to explore careers in engineering and science.

The council also honored both the AFRL and the New York State Department of Transportation for their contributions to the Project SITES program through the years.

Representing the laboratory and serving as hosts to students were: Dr. Dan Benecasa, Carla Burns, Mike Decker, Rita Ellis, Mark Foresti, Lee Gallagher, Darren Haddad, Chet Maciag, John Russo, James Maier, Dr. Andy Noga, Lt. Vinod Noga, John Pletl, Nehemiah Robinson, Virginia Ross, Richard Simard, Lt. Gary Sunada, Dr. Stanley Wenndt and Joyce Williams. @